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Higher Education and Society: A research report

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March 2010

About the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information (CHERI)

Aims and objectives

Our **aim** is to inform higher education policy. We do so by providing research, intelligence and analysis to policy makers at institutional, national and international levels. We also contribute to the international field of higher education policy research and disseminate information about higher education developments to the wider academic community.

Our **focus** is upon the relationship between higher education and society. This relationship is explored institutionally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

Our **projects** both contribute to international scholarship on higher education and inform the formulation, implementation and evaluation of particular higher education policies.

Our **collaborators** include leading international higher education research groups from many parts of the world.

The Centre's main areas of expertise in higher education are:

> ➢ employment and the knowledge society

> ➢ equity and social justice

> ➢ management and regulation

For further information about CHERI see www.open.ac.uk/cheri

Introduction

This report draws on a substantial body of research undertaken by the Open University's Centre for Higher Education Research and Information (CHERI) on the changing relationships between higher education and society. Higher education currently faces many changes, some externally driven by government policies and changing patterns of social and economic demand and some internally driven by changes in the way knowledge is produced and organised within universities and other 'knowledge organisations'. CHERI examines these changes through empirical research which is policy relevant though not policy dictated, frequently international, and broadly focused on the social impacts of higher education. Does higher education make a difference and to whom? In their different ways, the articles in this report seek to provide answers to this important but difficult question.

The article by Brennan and David poses the question in terms of student learning, drawing on a major recent national study of students and exploring the effects of the growing diversities of students, their learning experiences and the outcomes of those experiences. The article by Arthur and Little poses the question in terms of graduates, using a recent European study to highlight the rather distinctive features of the entry of UK graduates into the labour market. The article by Cochrane and Williams draws on a recent national study to look at the regional impact of higher education, especially upon the more socially disadvantaged groups in society. The article by Kim and Locke takes a rather different tack, using a recent international study of academics to raise questions of how the functioning – and ultimately the impact – of higher education may be affected by the growing amount of international mobility among the academic profession.

The four empirically based articles are complemented by two more analytic pieces by King and by Singh which seek to locate higher education research in features of globalisation in general and in the global agendas of higher education's policy makers in particular.

The research drawn on in these articles is part of a larger programme of research being undertaken by CHERI. Some other current and recent projects are summarised at the end of this report. There are three main themes to CHERI's research on the social impacts of higher education: Employment and the Knowledge Society; Equity and Social Justice; Management and Regulation. More information can be found on our website at www.open.ac.uk/cheri. We hope this work will continue to contribute to a better understanding of higher education's role in modern societies.

Professor John Brennan
Director, CHERI
March 2010

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Teaching, learning and the student experience in UK higher education

John Brennan[1] and Miriam David[2]

What is learned at university? And does it matter? (by John Brennan)

The journalist Nick Cohen has recently drawn our attention[3] to Oscar Wilde's thoughts on the impact of education. One of his characters in *The Importance of Being Ernest* opines that

> 'Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious threat to the upper classes and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square.'

This is not a formulation of the 'impact' of education that would endear itself to contemporary higher education policy makers who are seeking measures of 'impact' in terms of a better skilled workforce, a more productive economy, regenerated regions, increased social mobility etc. However, Wilde and the contemporary policy makers might be in some agreement that there *should* be an impact, on the individual and on society, from the large amounts of both public and private investment that goes into higher education. At the present time of economic crisis, the men and women sitting in the Treasury might have quite legitimate questions to ask about investment in higher education and about whether universities are part of the 'problem' or part of the 'solution' to today's economic and social difficulties.

In asking 'what is learned at university?' CHERI's project – *The Social and Organisational Mediation of University Learning (SOMUL)*, part of the ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) – sought to look beyond the content of formal university curricula for answers to this rather basic question about university learning and its impact. While at one level, the answer to 'what is learned' can be found in the essays, test results and examination scripts produced by university students during the course of their studies, such an answer does not of itself tell us much about the significance or the impact of such learning. Much learning is soon forgotten when the context of its acquisition has been left behind.

It is of course possible to find answers to the question of what is learned at university in the course prospectuses and mission statements of individual universities, in the subject benchmark statements produced by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher

The SOMUL project – full title 'What is Learned at University? The social and organisational mediation of learning' – was funded as part of the Economic and Social Research Council's Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP).It explored the experiences of undergraduate students in diverse university settings through case studies of study programmes in the biosciences, business studies and sociology.

Among the published outcomes to date are six project working papers published by the Higher Education Academy (http://www.open.ac.uk/cheri/pages/CHERI-Projects-SOMUL-Outputs.shtml) and a book published by Routledge:

Improving What is Learned at University: An exploration of the social and organisational diversity of university education, by John Brennan, Robert Edmunds, Muir Houston, David Jary, Yann Lebeau, Michael Osborne and John T E Richardson.

John Brennan was Director of the SOMUL project and Miriam David was Associate Director of TLRP.

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[2] Miriam David is Professor of Sociology of Education, Institute of Education, University of London.

[3] Nick Cohen, 2009, *Waiting for the Etonians: Reports from the Sickbed of Liberal England,* London: Harper-Collins.

Education, in the policies of central government and other national agencies, as well as in a significant scholarly literature on the purposes and benefits of higher education. But it can be argued that, at best, such answers may be rather partial (to say nothing of their being self-interested), reflecting the intentions of the learning providers more than the experiences of the learners and ultimately lacking evidence of the utilisation and impact of learning.

There has, of course, been previous research which has looked at learning from the student's perspective. For example, the well-known studies undertaken by Howard Becker and associates in the United States during the 1960s suggested that student learning was essentially context bound and mainly concerned with obtaining 'grades'. Even in the hard science of medicine, at university students essentially learned to be medical students and it was not until they moved on to practice medicine that the real process of professional learning began (Becker et al., 1961 and 1968). And more recently, writing from a very different perspective, David Perkins from Harvard has called for more attention to be given to the acquisition of 'pro-active' knowledge that 'goes beyond understanding to prepare the learner for the alert and lively use of knowledge' (Perkins, 2008).

In seeking answers to the question of what is learned in contemporary higher education in the UK, the SOMUL study drew on previous research in such areas as theories of learning in higher education, studies of academic and disciplinary cultures and identities, and more sociologically-based studies of the effects of higher education on students. Around the time that the project got started, a major review of the US literature on the effects of higher education on students was published and its overarching conclusion chimed with the initial thinking underpinning the SOMUL project.

> 'The research consistently shows that learning is bound neither by time nor by place, that it occurs continuously in a variety of locations, often unpredictably, and that it is maximised when both the activities and outcomes have meaning to the learner. Finally, learning is not a solitary activity, but is more likely to be relational and social, taking place when students engage in a task with others.' (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005)

The research carried out by the SOMUL project has been described in detail elsewhere (Brennan, et al., 2009). The purpose of this paper is to highlight some of its main findings and consider their implications. A second purpose is to set those findings within the larger framework provided by the ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme. This has been the largest educational research programme in the UK, running from 2000 up until the present time, with a budget of over £30m and with projects investigating learning at all stages of the life course. We will look at some of the main conclusions of the larger research programme at the end of this paper where we might use them to consider a further question of 'what (if anything) is special about what is learned at university'.

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The somewhat special claims that are made for university learning provide a useful starting point for discussing some of the findings of the SOMUL project. Until not so long ago, attendance at university was the preserve of a relatively small elite. A social elitism blurred into an educational elitism. Was attendance at university prized because of what was learned there or because of what it said about the status and social origins of the learner? A lot has been written about 'elite reproduction' and 'status confirmation' functions of higher education (Bourdieu, 1988 and 1996; Brown and Scase, 1994; Feldman and Newcombe, 1969). These remain relevant but they fail to tell the whole story in relation to the role and effects of mass systems of higher education. Indeed, a whole strand of the larger TLRP research programme was devoted to 'widening participation in higher education' reflecting the fact that a whole new set of issues arise when elite expands into mass higher education.

The distinction between elite and mass higher education was of interest to the SOMUL project as part of a larger set of interests in the diversity of higher education in the UK - diversity in terms of different kinds of universities, diversity in the backgrounds and motivations of the students and diversity in the living conditions and forms of students' engagement with higher education. The project was above all interested in the extent to which the above diversities could be related to a further diversity, i.e. in what was learned at university.

The central empirical work of the SOMUL project concentrated on the experiences of students in 15 different university settings, five each in the subject areas of biosciences, business studies and sociology. The settings were chosen to represent different social and organisational features of the university and its student body, reflecting the various diversities described above. In order to make the project manageable and to develop the link between social and organisational diversities and the possible diversity of learning outcomes, the project used a simple typology based on (i) the diversity of the student population within the particular university setting, and (ii) the extent to which the student experience was a shared one. Combining these dimensions and applying them to the project's 15 case studies, the project produced a typology of three contrasting learning settings: Type A, where a diverse group of students came together to share a largely common experience at university; Type B where broadly similar kinds of students came together to share a largely common experience; and Type C where individual students had only limited contact with each other and the experience of university was largely an individualised one.

The details of the courses and their university settings have been described elsewhere (Brennan, et al., 2009). When applied to the 15 cases in the project, there appeared to be three examples of Type A settings, eight examples of Type B, and four examples of Type C. It was of course possible for individual students to be having, say, a Type C experience in a Type B setting. And in a few cases, the classification of the particular setting was somewhat arbitrary with no

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one type predominating. This situation was described by one pro-vice-chancellor as a 'parallel university' and posed particular challenges for the university leadership as well as for individual teachers.

The interest of the project was, of course, in whether these three different types of university learning setting produced differences in what was learned. In fact, there were both commonalities and differences between settings in the outcomes of learning as seen from the student perspective. What was common across all the settings was the importance attached to the 'social' and the 'personal', to the new friendships made, the gains in self-confidence and ability to get on with a wide range of people. There were also differences between the settings. Students in Type B settings seemed to have acquired very strong loyalties to their universities, students in Type A settings seemed to be the more committed to their subjects, and students in Type C settings tended to emphasise the qualification and the continued importance of their lives outside higher education. Of course, these differences can also be related to other familiar differences between, for example, mature and younger students, post 92 and pre 92 universities, campus based and more distributed university settings. But the project preferred to emphasise its own typology, partly because the other categorisations fitted the data less well, but also because some of them tended to come with a baggage of status connotations that were not necessarily helpful to an understanding of the learning that was taking place in them.

The findings of the project also echoed the findings of the recent US literature that the amount of learning is not related to 'quality rankings' of institutions or, as the research team put it in one of their publications, 'you won't necessarily learn more if you go to a posh place'![4]

Perhaps one of the conclusions that the project has not emphasised enough to date is the difference between the student voices on what is learned and the voices of the universities and those who teach in them. It is not that academic content is unimportant to the students. It is that other more important things may be happening to them alongside their academic studies. These personal and social effects of university study may not just be of value to the individual students, they may be socially and economically important as well. Self-confidence, understanding of other people, being part of social networks and the like are relevant in the workplace and in all social settings where diverse people come together to construct a viable social life for themselves and others. In their focus on skills and employability, policy makers may be underselling the importance of universities to the creation and maintenance of a stable and fair social order.

This paper has touched only briefly on the main findings of the SOMUL project, but, taken as a whole, these do not support the thoughts of Oscar Wilde's character about the lack of impact of higher

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[4] John Brennan and David Jary, 2005, *What is learned at University?* Working Paper 1, York: Higher Education Academy.

education. We now turn briefly to what the rest of the TLRP programme has to tell us in relation to Wilde's thoughts about the impact of education and whether the impacts of specifically *higher* education appear to be distinctive in any ways.

Effective learning and teaching in UK higher education (by Miriam David)

The SOMUL project was one of the highlights of the TLRP's projects on higher education. Others included:

- disabled students' learning in higher education;

- enhancing teaching-learning environments in undergraduate courses;

- learning to perform music in advanced musical learning settings;

- a suite of seven projects on widening participation in higher education;

- a set of projects on teaching and learning policies and practices in post-devolution UK contexts.

Together these projects on teaching and learning covered 60 UK higher education institutions, including some specialist colleges for music and teacher education. Research was conducted in over 40 colleges and old and new universities in England, two in northern Ireland, 11 in Scotland and five in Wales. They ranged across modes of study (full-time and part-time) and subjects, from the social sciences, such as business studies, education and sociology, to the humanities such as history, and to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects including biology and medicine.

The question of the balance between STEM and non-STEM subjects in terms of their impact on society and the economy is at present taxing the Government and its policy makers in not only the Treasury (as Brennan has mentioned above) but also the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the newly created Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. The universities are now located in this department as part of an attempt to refocus policies on business and skills and innovation.

We have drawn on all of these projects and complementary projects on post-compulsory or further education to illustrate how the highly charged political contexts and changing forms of higher education are influencing effective learning and teaching. From this plethora of research, and our analyses of all the projects, we have developed a series of evidence-informed principles for effective pedagogies in higher education (see our policy commentary *Effective learning and teaching in UK higher education* (June 2009).

By effectiveness, we mean a commitment to ensuring fairness and equity in learning and teaching for student outcomes from their higher education experiences. Our principles are to ensure the social role of

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universities and other forms of higher education in democracies, which also depend upon the capacity for critical reasoning and argument, and to support the professional development of teachers and lecturers in higher education.

The principles are the product of an iterative process of consultation and debate between researchers, practitioners, policy makers and the TLRP Directors' team. Our evidence shows that the fast-changing policy context for higher education has had an inordinate influence on research and on teaching and learning. We use the term 'teaching and learning' interchangeably with 'pedagogy'. We are aware that there is a lively debate between educational and social researchers in higher education about the science of practice or praxis of teaching. Recently ideas about pedagogical research or pedagogy have become usual for researchers on educational or academic developments and on certain aspects of subject expertise. Others, however, argue that pedagogy by definition applies only to the learning of children. Yet others argue that the process of learning evolves from school to university as students develop intellectual resources for learning. What is at issue, they say, is the cognitive aspect of transition, and the shift is essentially in the learner's autonomy. We use the concept of pedagogy although we are aware of these lively debates.

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As Brennan has also noted, our work uses a broad definition of what is learned. We go beyond subjects at school, such as mathematics and biology, to include others whose study begins in higher education, such as electronic engineering, social sciences such as social care, and teacher education, with its implications for academic or educational development. Most importantly, we have found that the use of ICT has come to dominate all subjects and disciplines and is threaded throughout our studies. This is a major theme for the next phase of TLRP, through the new Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) and discussed in a TLRP commentary *Education 2.0: Designing the web for teaching and learning.*

Although our higher education data collection ranged widely over concepts, theories and methodologies, including both quantitative and qualitative methods, there were certain limitations to the data collected. There was not a major emphasis on social or diversity issues in the main datasets, although some of the projects emphasised these questions. In particular, the varying concepts of diversity were important to SOMUL and the seven widening participation projects, whilst gender was a key variable for the music and some of the teacher education studies.

Our ten evidence-informed principles for effective pedagogy illustrate that there have been improvements in the quality of the student learning experiences across diverse systems of higher education. Recent changes have included new forms of universities and further education colleges becoming universities. This growth has been encouraged by policy measures to widen access to and participation within higher education (see TLRP commentary *Widening participation in higher education*). There are now almost half a million

more full and part-time undergraduates in higher education in 2007-8 than in 1997-8.

Inequality continues to affect both individuals and institutions, despite all the changes in and expansion of higher education. Impact is therefore unevenly spread across institutions and individuals. Growth in student numbers has not been accompanied by increases in institutional and teaching resources. This systemic inequality has affected student-teacher relationships and forms of learning in all subjects, including inter-disciplinary work. However, there are also opportunities for developing new and critical pedagogies. More inclusive or connectionist approaches, rather than 'teaching to the test', would engage socially diverse students in a range of higher education subjects and settings.

From our TLRP evidence then we find a need for improvements in and more research on:

- the UK policy framework, especially given the global economic climate (Principle 1). Consideration needs to be given to governmental and administrative responsibilities. No one department has responsibility now for all aspects of higher education;

- pedagogic research, with resources to develop lecturers in higher education institutions and colleges better (Principle 2). The focus should be on research into different types of inquiry, educational and academic development and the moral purposes and social role of higher education (Principle 10);

- expertise and experience in relation to pedagogies to engage socially diverse students (Principles 6-9);

- social and informal contexts for learning in the full range of institutions and subjects, including the active engagement of the student as learner (Principles 3-5);

- individual students in relation to equity and diversity (Principles 8 and 10).

Whilst the TLRP higher education projects have demonstrated that higher education has a range of economic, social and personal impacts, and learning extends beyond subject expertise, there is still a need to adopt a broad conception of worthwhile learning outcomes. Issues of equity and social justice for all, across social, economic, ethnic and gender differences need serious consideration.

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The REFLEX study: exploring graduates' views on the relationship between higher education and employment

Lore Arthur[5] and Brenda Little[6]

Introduction

UK undergraduates spend less time on higher education and feel less well-prepared for work immediately after graduation than those in most other European countries. UK employers provide more training and give more attention to the assessment and supervision of their graduate employees than in most other countries on the European continent (Brennan, 2008a). Yet it can also be argued that UK graduates are more flexible than their continental European counterparts and accept that the transition to work is not a straightforward process. Such findings give rise to numerous, perhaps contentious, questions concerning the value of higher education in its societal context and of higher education's links to labour markets which, if considered more explicitly, could help explain such findings.

In this article we present some of the main findings from the REFLEX study exploring the relationship between higher education and employment. In particular, we look at differences between UK and other European graduates' views on this relationship and consider what reasons might underlie such differences.

Inevitably, a research project of this kind – which involved teams of researchers from different countries steeped in different intellectual and cultural traditions – meant that there were initially a number of practical issues to be resolved. For example, translating survey questions from one language into another caused endless problems (and for one partner, the survey had to be produced in three national languages – German, French and Italian). While project partners had agreed on English as a working language, the sheer variety of languages involved, though enriching, nevertheless lessened the efficiency of working across the teams. Reciprocal explanations of terminology were time consuming and difficult to realise, though sometimes, it has to be admitted, partners of a monolingual country were equally confronted with divergent ideas. Words such as 'job' or 'occupation', even 'profession' carry different meaning in different cultural contexts. However, this meant that by the end of the project participating researchers had gained a deeper understanding of the countries concerned which, in turn, is reflected in the reporting of findings on similarities and differences across Europe and elsewhere. Viewed from the UK perspective, it is some of the more comparative dimensions we want to address here.

The REFLEX Study – full title 'The Flexible Professional in the Knowledge Society: new demands on higher education in Europe' – was a European Commission Framework VI project that examined how graduates in different European countries were prepared for the labour market.

The project was led by Professor Rolf van der Velden at the University of Maastricht. The UK REFLEX project team comprised CHERI staff and associates Lore Arthur, John Brennan, Rod Hick, Brenda Little and Alan Woodley.

Among several published outcomes from this project is a series of reports commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). These sought to highlight distinctive features of the relationship between higher education and the labour market in the UK when compared with other European countries. These reports can be found at http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2008/rd22_08/

A further report entitled 'Employer and higher education perspectives on graduates in the knowledge society' (based on a qualitative study undertaken in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and the UK in 2005) can be found at http://www.open.ac.uk/cheri/documents/qualitative-report-final-version.pdf.

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Contexts matter

Educational historians have traditionally referred to the 'Humboldtian', the 'Napoleonic' and the 'Anglo-Saxon' traditions within European higher education (and which were exported around the world during the colonial period). Gellert (1993) refers to them as the 'research', the 'training' and the 'personality' models, respectively. While these models refer effectively to the elite higher education systems of more than a century ago, they may still have relevance to an understanding of differences in the relationships between higher education and employment in different countries (Brennan, 2008b). In Germany, indeed, as in all countries whose tertiary education was based on the German model of higher education, the tension between *Bildung* (personal development) and *Ausbildung* (training) was, and still is, a cause of concern. Humboldtian values embrace academic freedom to teach and research together with the freedom to learn without much interference from policy makers. Such values underlie an occupation-led education system coupled with occupation-specific competences, leading to content-specific qualifications (see, for example, Maurice, Sellier and Silvestre, 1982). It is a system which is still marked by institutional stratification and distinct boundaries between vocational education and training and university higher education. In continental Europe, generally, vocational credentials and qualifications tend to be more tightly linked to the area of work, to vocational institutions and their traditions. Though some note palpable change in their informal status and a significant shift in traditional universities, structural boundaries are not easily eroded (Scott, 2008). For example, in the stratified binary systems of post-compulsory education entry to most jobs is highly regulated through precise qualification requirements generally obtained *within* the education system. Many continental graduates, therefore, when leaving higher education are more fully formed as professionals than those in the UK (Arthur et al., 2007). The traditionally longer first degree courses in continental European higher education systems allow the inclusion of a greater volume of occupationally-relevant preparation.

The Anglo-Saxon model of tertiary education, by contrast, is characterised by a less well-developed system of vocational education and training and a higher education system which, in the main, provides a broad educational 'liberal' base with less emphasis on subject-specific, skills-related content; it is a system with a 'loose fit' between higher education and a graduate's subsequent area of work (Little, 2001). Thus, UK graduates' professional formation is likely to take place *after* completion of the relatively short first degree - either through further study or through employment (or a mixture of both).

UK undergraduates spend less time on higher education and feel less well prepared for work immediately after graduation than those in most other European countries

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Evaluating findings

The REFLEX study was undertaken against the implementation of the Bologna Agreement (1999) which has as its aim the establishment of a common structure of European higher education qualifications based on two main cycles, undergraduate (culminating in a Bachelor degree) and graduate (leading to a Masters degree). This has meant that higher education institutions in most countries, excluding the UK, have been involved in structural reforms, albeit at different stages of development. However, as the REFLEX study surveyed people who had graduated in 1999/2000, the data reported from the study predates the Bologna reforms. UK graduates in the sample, therefore, had completed their initial higher education with a Bachelors degree while most other respondents had obtained a Masters-equivalent qualification (pre-Bologna). Most UK respondents were also much younger than their European counterparts – almost three quarters were aged between 20-24 on graduation, compared to less than half of European graduates overall.

The relationship between study at higher education and preparation for work and employment gained after graduation can be viewed in terms of 'match' or 'mis-match', i.e. higher education prepares students well for work or not (Storen and Arnerson, 2007). This means that graduates may be employed according to their subject specificity and the level of education obtained, or they may be generalists where subject knowledge matters less. In extreme cases, neither the subject knowledge nor the level of education equates to the first job obtained after graduation. As the overall REFLEX project report to the EC notes:

> '… in addition to countries and fields of study that are known from earlier research to produce graduates who often find it difficult to find work that matches their capabilities (humanities, Southern European countries), the UK stands out as a country where many graduates fail to utilise their skills.' (Allen and van der Velden, 2007: ix)

Whilst it is true that the UK did stand out in these and other respects, it must be emphasised that a clear majority of UK graduates (as did European graduates overall) considered that their first jobs on graduation *did* require a tertiary level of education, *did* require study in a particular field and *did* utilise the graduate's skills and knowledge acquired during higher education. But, as Table 1 shows, there was only a loose link between first job and higher education for a third or more of UK graduates.

It has previously been suggested that the above data might indicate that UK graduates take less employment-related knowledge, skill and competence into the labour market, but it might also suggest that UK employers require less of their graduate entrants (Brennan, 2008b). It may also reflect the fact that in many continental European countries entry to jobs is highly regulated through precise qualification requirements generally obtained *within* the education system. And we should not overlook the fact that within the UK a large proportion of

The Anglo-Saxon model of tertiary education …….. is a system with a 'loose fit' between higher education and a graduate's subsequent area of work

Table 1: The relationship between higher education and the first job after graduation (%)

Graduates considered their first job after graduation	Europe	UK
… required an education level below tertiary level	18	38
… did not require a particular field of study	13	35
… did not/hardly utilize(d) knowledge and skills	19	33

graduate jobs are advertised on the basis of 'any discipline'. This may imply that a fit between field of study and subsequent job is not a prime concern to UK employers. In fact, a recent survey of almost 600 employers found around three quarters cited graduates' employability skills and positive attitudes as the most important factors in recruitment; just over a half ranked relevant work experience as important, but only four in ten considered subject of degree was important, though this varied by area of employment (CBI/UUK, 2009). Further, such signals from the labour market may encourage graduates to look beyond their own field of study when applying for jobs. Also, what we cannot know from such bald data is whether those who felt their first job required a lower level of education had, nevertheless, been able to put their graduate skills to good use to change and 'grow' their first job, and/or introduce new ideas and ways of working into their work role and those of others.

We referred above to the underlying traditions of different higher education systems, and in particular the greater volume of occupationally-relevant preparation within higher education programmes in continental European systems. One particularly striking difference between the UK and most other European countries was the extent to which graduates had undertaken work placements/internships during higher education. Overall, more than half (55 per cent) of European graduates overall had undertaken a placement during higher education; and in Finland, Germany and the Netherlands the overwhelming majority had done so (around 80 per cent). But less than a third (29 per cent) of UK graduates reported having undertaken a placement. Further, it seems that the incidence of internships within higher education programmes did have an effect on graduates' initial jobs:

> '… graduates who followed a program (sic) that stressed internship …were more positive in their evaluation of the programme providing a good basis to start working. However we found no effect on the development of competences, nor did we find any effect on current employment chances or earnings. This seems to indicate that its role is mainly in providing a smooth allocation to jobs, rather than in developing professional expertise.' (Allen and van der Velden, 2007: 277)

But what of differences, stark or otherwise, between the *current* employment of graduates in the different countries? Table 2 shows the relationship between graduates' higher education and their current employment, five years after graduation.

Clearly, there are some differences between UK graduates and European graduates overall in terms of the relationship between higher education and current employment, but they are no longer as stark as the differences seen in relation to graduates' initial employment: – the match no longer seems quite so loose.

CHERI's overview report to HEFCE notes that while differences in graduates' perceptions of the appropriateness of jobs largely

One particularly striking difference between the UK and most other European countries was the extent to which graduates had undertaken work placements/ internships during higher education

Table 2: The relationship between higher education and current job, five years after graduation (%)

Graduates considered their current job	Europe	UK
… required an education level below tertiary level	10	15
… did not require a particular field of study	9	20
… did not/hardly utilize(d) knowledge and skills	9	14

disappear over the five years after graduation, differences remain in the perceived relevance of higher education to work. UK graduates were less likely than European graduates overall to consider their study programme was a good basis for starting work, for further learning on the job and for performing current work tasks. As the editors of the main REFLEX project report to the EC note:

> '… (the) UK stands out as a country where graduates find it difficult to find a job that fully utilises their skills (…) It is not clear whether this is caused by the weaker link between higher education programs and specific areas of employment in the UK or with the fact that most UK higher education graduates have followed programs that are much shorter in duration than most programs in continental Europe. But the fact that UK graduates have not been able to catch up in the first five years after graduation and more often indicate that their study program did not provide a good basis for starting work, to further learning on the job or to perform current work tasks deserves serious attention.' (Allen and van der Velden, 2007: 274)

But an alternative explanation put forward in CHERI's overview report to HEFCE is that UK graduates may well have prepared themselves for work by other means (including through employers providing more initial formal training in their first jobs). And, of course, work-related training does not stop after graduates' initial experiences in work; 69 per cent of UK graduates (compared to 63 per cent across Europe as a whole) had undertaken some work-related training within the previous 12 months. Whilst the incidence of such training varied between employment sectors, in each of the main sectors of employment (business, education, health and social work, manufacturing, public administration) UK graduates were more likely to have experienced such training. But whether this is an indication of UK graduates having a greater need for such training (which could reflect a lack of relevant knowledge and skills) or employers' desire for employees to develop a new/broader range of knowledge and skills is not clear from the data. The single most important reason cited by graduates for undertaking such training was to update their knowledge for their current work, but UK graduates were slightly less likely to give this reason (60 per cent compared to 66 per cent overall). The other important reason cited by a quarter of European graduates was to enhance their own career, but UK graduates were much more likely to cite this reason for work-related training (a third did so). This greater emphasis on 'enhancing career' may reflect, yet again, the looser linkage between higher education and employment such that some five years after graduation many UK graduates are more likely to be still developing their own career pathways (Little, 2008).

There is also a suggestion that too close a match between higher education and subsequent job may affect graduates' capacity to be flexible in the workplace. The REFLEX study found that UK and Dutch graduates were more likely than others to be exposed to

This greater emphasis on 'enhancing career' may reflect … the looser linkage between higher education and employment such that some five years after graduation many UK graduates are more likely to be still developing their own career pathways

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changes in work tasks and the corresponding need for functional flexibility – and as the authors concede:

> '… being very flexible, in the sense of being prepared to take on work outside of one's own specific area of training can in fact hamper the possibility to fully utilise all of one's skills as – by definition – only a part of these skills will be put to use in any job.' (Allen and van der Velden, 2007: 270)

Such flexibility (whether supplied by graduates and/or demanded by employers) and the traditional UK looseness of fit between higher education and employment may in fact be a positive outcome and suit both parties (graduates and employers) in the sense that, within the UK's more open and flexible labour market, possession of the right credential is less crucial 'leaving more space for the operation of a whole set of social and cultural factors' in the job allocation process (Arthur et al., 2007: 6). It might also indicate that UK employers use higher education more as a selection, rather than a training 'tool'. As noted in CHERI's overview report to HEFCE:

> '…one interpretation of this research is that higher education in the UK provides an academic foundation for employment which is built on after graduation by professional training largely provided by employers. But in the rest of Europe, the much longer time spent in higher education permits the combination of both academic and professional education within higher education.' (Brennan, 2008a: 4)

Such observations bring to the fore a number of questions arising from the REFLEX study's findings, including:

- is the actual productivity of UK graduates different in any ways from the equivalent graduates in equivalent jobs in other European countries?

- do we need to question the equivalences between UK and other European graduates and graduate jobs which reflect different national traditions and cultures?

In terms of graduate employability, it may be that within the UK, with its shorter initial period of higher education, more attention should be paid to the contribution made in the years immediately after the first degree through, for example, employer training, postgraduate courses, and early work experiences.

Of course, the intended greater harmonisation between European higher education systems and concomitant structural reforms following the implementation of the Bologna Agreement may well result in rather more continental European graduates having a shorter initial period of higher education – more akin to the UK first degree – than is currently the case. So a further question arises for higher education policy makers across Europe, namely, what are the likely consequences of trends towards convergence and greater harmonisation between higher education and labour markets, arising both from the Bologna Process and larger trends towards global knowledge economies?

In terms of graduate employability, it may be that within the UK, with its shorter initial period of higher education, more attention should be paid to the contribution made in the years immediately after the first degree

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The role of higher education in social and cultural transformation

Allan Cochrane[7] and Ruth Williams[8]

The historical context

Many UK universities have their foundations grounded in a wider civic and social role. For example, the universities founded in the nineteenth century emerged from the demands of a rapidly industrialising society and the new social relations associated with it (see Watson, 2008). As Harold Silver has noted, the 'Histories of the nineteenth century foundations [of universities] place their beginnings in community and wider contexts' (Silver, 2007: 536). However, since this period, the relationship between university, regional context and local community has become rather more uncertain, as institutions have come to develop their own academic identities, often locating themselves within wider national and even global academic and educational networks.

Historically, much of the literature on higher education's relationship with society concentrates on its links with industry and the economy. Indeed, during the nineteenth century shipping, cotton, wool, heavy industry and finance provided the basis for the founding of the civic universities that sprang up around the country. Thus, these universities were linked with the industries (and the associated business elites) that defined the regions and localities in which they found themselves and this helped to mark them out, in clear contrast to Oxford and Cambridge which were connected to rather different elites.

After 1945, the role of higher education as a social instrument and agency became widely accepted. A recurring theme of the 1950s was equality of opportunity, and the succeeding decade of 'dramatic and extraordinary change' (Stewart, 1989: 95), which incorporated a significant expansion of the higher education system, was predicated on the ambition of moving towards a 'just and concerned society' (ibid: 144). The profile of universities as agents of social change was lower key in the 1970s and 1980s, with an emphasis on their infrastructural role in underpinning the economy and the expansion of the 1990s was also justified in terms that emphasised the need for higher level skills in an emerging globalised knowledge economy. As the decade progressed, however, this was combined with New Labour's more explicit social agenda, with the promise of widening participation and the reduction of social exclusion through the opening up of higher education to wider sections of society.

Until the late 1980s, of course, there were formal linkages between some higher education institutions and their communities because of

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the role of local authorities in the oversight of regional (and local and area) colleges and polytechnics. When the polytechnics were made statutory corporations by the Education Reform Act of 1988 those formal linkages also ended. Policy agendas in higher education (including its expansion, the drive to quality assurance in teaching and excellence in research) were nationally driven and nationally focused, although the process of devolution meant that agendas might vary between the United Kingdom's component nations.

In recent years the role of universities in the development of disadvantaged regions has been given greater prominence in policy documents. For example, a 2007 OECD report identifies the multiple roles higher education institutions can play in their regions: through knowledge creation and transfer, and cultural and community development, which create 'the conditions where innovation thrives' (p. 1). It goes on to say that

> 'Regional development is not only about helping business thrive: wider forms of development both serve economic goals and are ends in themselves. HEIs have long seen service to the community as part of their role, yet this function is often underdeveloped.' (p. 5)

This quote usefully reminds us that the involvement of higher education institutions in local and regional development may deliver on more than just narrow economic goals, even if the community role is often not given the attention it deserves either by universities or government agencies. Recognition of this also informs a white paper on the future of higher education in England

> '… institutions should increasingly be embedded in their regional economies (…) The nature of the role will depend upon each institution's missions and skills (…) in all cases, universities and colleges are key drivers for their regions, both economically and in terms of the social and cultural contribution they make to their communities.' (DfES, 2003: 36)

Theoretical perspective

The social role of universities has recently been the subject of wider debate. Academics and university administrators have been criticised for making self-satisfied assumptions about their role as carriers of liberal values and generators of human well-being. In his discussion of the university and the public good, Calhoun (2006) powerfully questions the way in which the private role of universities (that is, their role in benefiting their staff, students or alumni, or even business) has too often been reframed as a public good. 'Professors', he points out, 'tend to think universities exist naturally, or as a gift of history, in order to employ them' (Calhoun, 2006: 34).

He discusses some of the tensions between different visions of what universities might be for and how they might contribute to the public good. One of the dangers is that instead of more confidently identifying their contribution, they increasingly seek to sell themselves

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to governments and others in terms of the private goods they can deliver (higher salaries for alumni, skilled labour for particular economic sectors etc.) (Calhoun, 2006: 12).

For Calhoun the issue is a different one. He argues that the contribution universities may make to the public good is rooted in their ability to develop spaces of communication, spaces in which individuals and groups may interact to generate political progress. From this perspective, it is openness to critical debate and the ability to foster spaces within which such debate and interaction can take place that should define the wider role of universities. He stresses the need for free, open and critical debate within but not just within academia and across but not only across disciplines.

Increasingly, however, universities seem to have been called on to play a rather more active and interventionist role, related to the delivery of wider social goals and even to the transformation of society. Their contribution to the development of transitional societies, whether in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe or post-Apartheid South Africa has been explored in work by Brennan et al. (2004). Here the expansion of higher education has been fostered, not 'because of a belief in the intrinsic good of education [but for] more instrumental purposes to do with economic development, social cohesion, national identity and so on' (Brennan et al., 2004: 58).

The current policy landscape

These more instrumental purposes also help to frame the contemporary policy context in the UK. There is an expectation – from government and more widely – that higher education should fulfil a number of purposes:

- to be a major contributor to economic success;

- to produce, exchange and transfer cutting edge knowledge from research; and

- to produce graduates with appropriate skills and knowledge.

And, as noted above, it is also expected to contribute to the creation of a more socially inclusive society. Given the pressures of meeting these expectations, there must be some doubt about whether all can successfully be met. However, the distinctive missions and priorities that higher education providers have developed seems to be a strength of an increasingly diverse system in England – 'it provides opportunity for a wider range of learners and helps to meet the needs of specific regional and local economic and social contexts' (Little and Williams, 2009).

In this context, the notion of widening participation is important because of the way in which it brings together concerns of social equity (apparently creating new opportunities for those previously excluded from higher education) with concerns to transform the labour force, producing a labour force more appropriate for the global marketplace and the emergent knowledge economy in particular. The

increased emphasis on the social and economic 'impact' of universities is also reflected in discussions about the regional role of universities, so that they are expected to help transform 'lagging' regions and help make them 'competitive', at the same time as supporting 'leading' regions in maintaining their strengths and competitive advantages. It is, perhaps easiest to measure impact in economic terms, but other forms of impact may also be the subject of policy intervention – so that, for example, community engagement is identified as a way by which universities can have a social impact on disadvantaged communities through volunteering and other community projects. At the same time, however, it needs to be recognised that:

> ' … universities are located in a global environment and face growing competitive pressure due to ranking and internationalisation. Also, universities need to diversify income sources and one of the channels is through the commercialisation of research (…) There is a growing expectation on the part of industry and business that universities will meet some of their immediate needs, and external stakeholders are increasing their voice in university activities.' (OECD, 2006: 1)

The HEART project

The ESRC funded HEART (Higher Education and Regional Transformation) project has been developed in relation to these wider debates. It asks what the role of universities may be in helping to shape and redefine the economic and social experience of the regions in which they are located, and particularly sets out to consider how they might be mobilised to counter forms of social disadvantage in their surrounding regions. The project is structured around four case study institutions and the regions in which they are located. The universities are located in three contrasting urban regions in England and one in Scotland, and cover a range of types. In other words we have been able to consider both how the different missions of particular universities may affect their regional engagement and how differences in regional context may shape what is possible. Interviews have been conducted with key players in the universities and with a range of stakeholders, including community based interests, local government, schools and other public agencies and business, as well as other locally based universities.

Preliminary results are beginning to emerge.

First, it is clear that the nature of the 'region' with which universities engage varies significantly with the activities on which they are focused and the nature of the institution. This is apparent in a number of ways. In English regions outside London there is usually formal engagement with regional development agencies on a range of issues, but the identification with the official region in other ways is less significant – where the regional development agency is a source of potential funding, then universities focus their attention on it, but

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otherwise this wider region is not generally significant. Despite involvement in formal regional structures (regional committees etc.), in practice the focus is much more directly on the city region, and often a more narrowly defined version of the city - the area most directly affected by a wide range of university decisions. This seems to be the case in both England and Scotland. In London, of course, matters are more complicated because of the wide range of institutions within the city, but here too emphasis is placed on a part of the city rather than the whole metropolitan region.

It is, perhaps, unsurprising that the institutional missions of the various universities have a substantial impact on the way in which they see themselves influencing and shaping their regions. Superficially, there may be similarities, e.g. in the way that they all emphasise their contribution to the building of a knowledge economy, but in practice these only mask wider differences. One of our case study institutions (a major Russell group university) is identified by stakeholders, and identifies itself, as having the task of bringing the world into the city region (a world class university in a world class city region) and also has a major direct contribution to make to the development of the city through major collaborative development of property with other local higher education institutions. Another stresses its contribution in building internationally significant digital media facilities locally, but the scale is very different and it is another university with a stake in that region which makes the claim to 'draw in the world'.

In terms of community engagement and widening participation the approaches are also very different. For three of the case study universities community engagement and widening participation go hand in hand – the one is intended to lead to the other at least in the longer term and widening participation is seen as a significant source of students. For the other institution, the main source of students is more traditional, with specific targeting intended to bring in a small number of highly qualified students from lower socio economic groups. All of the universities are, however, beginning to develop other forms of community engagement too, less directly focused on student recruitment and more on the wider social contribution that can be made through volunteering and in other ways. So, for example, it was suggested in several cases that even if collaboration with a particular school might not directly increase participation in higher education, it might raise the aspirations of children in other ways that help them to recognise the value of education and skills development.

If institutional mission is significant, however, it is also important to acknowledge the wider context (including historical context) in terms of shaping what is possible and how that influences strategy and practice. Institutional missions are themselves the product of what is possible, so that those institutions which place a greater emphasis on skills development both for regional populations and in response to perceived (regional) employer demand are also those for whom the recruitment of local students is the norm. Universities are all

embedded in their regions in particular ways, with long histories that underpin the relationships between regional and local stakeholders and this is reflected in the strategies they adopt and the ways in which they interact with local communities.

Conclusions

Our research raises important questions about how the core tasks and responsibilities of universities should be understood in the 21st century. In some respects, it is clear that teaching and knowledge production remain fundamental. But what is interesting is both how there may be unintended consequences from their involvement in these activities (e.g., in terms of community impact through studentification, in terms of cultural transformation changing local populations) and also the way in which wider tasks are being set for them. In the field of community engagement, the influence of government and funding council initiatives is apparent, except in those areas where some other business advantage has been identified. Universities also have to be seen as businesses whose main purpose is to survive in a particular funding environment and, like other businesses, corporate social responsibility is sometimes an afterthought unless the argument for business relevance has been won.

We have only just begun to analyse the data from our research and there is much to uncover. In particular, by the time the project concludes, we will have drawn out the impacts of our case study universities on disadvantaged communities. We will also have clarified whether the more instrumental responsibilities now being given to universities are achievable, alongside their continuing responsibility to deliver forms of public good along the lines identified by Calhoun.

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Transnational academic mobility and the academic profession

Terri Kim[9] and William Locke[10]

Introduction

The combined impacts of expansion and globalisation on higher education are usually discussed primarily in relation to students and their mobility, funding, higher education institutions as organisations, research and knowledge flows and graduate labour markets. Little attention has so far been paid, however, to the constituency that is central to many of these developments and, perhaps, at least equally affected by them: the academic profession. As a result, assumptions about, for example, the international migration of academics, the conditions favouring and inhibiting mobility, the nature of international academics' experiences in their host institutions and countries and the broader impact of academic mobility on styles of scholarship and intellectual traditions, remain largely unexamined. As Roger King asks in a more general way elsewhere in this report, is there global convergence or are there enduring national variations in academic mobility?

The international study of the *Changing Academic Profession* (CAP) – the United Kingdom part of which is led by CHERI – sheds some light on these issues, but further research is needed to fully illuminate the impact of transnational academic mobility on the academic profession (and vice versa) globally and in the UK. Here we draw on initial analyses of the CAP study findings, together with national and international data on academic mobility, in order to sketch out a research agenda on transnational academic migration and UK higher education.

> The international study of the *Changing Academic Profession* is examining the nature and extent of the changes experienced by the academic profession in recent years, the reasons for these changes and their consequences. The core of the research is a survey of academics in over 20 countries worldwide. The UK study was conducted by CHERI and funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, Universities UK, the Higher Education Academy and the Universities and Colleges Union.

International patterns of academic mobility

Initial analysis of the CAP survey findings suggests that we can summarise the characteristics of academic flows between (and within) national higher education systems in the following terms (Bennion and Locke, 2010):

a) 'Study abroad' describes the movement of individuals out of a national higher education system to undertake doctoral training abroad before re-entering the system for post-doctoral study and/or employment.

b) 'Magnetic' refers to the flow of academics to a national higher education system for study, work or both.

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c) 'Self-contained' portrays the internal movement of academic staff from study to employment within a national higher education system or even within a single institution.

It appears that countries can display one or more of these characteristics. For example, the United States and UK higher education systems attract individuals to study and work whilst also exhibiting a strong self-contained domestic labour market. The influence of US universities in attracting scholars is well documented. These institutions are open and flexible, provide generous scholarships and salaries and are thus extraordinary global attractors of talent. US research relies on foreign doctoral assistants and the country is the main destination for short-term academic visits as well as for later career migration. Yet, there is also a large majority of US academics who complete their training and remain employed within the national system for their entire careers.

In other countries one characteristic tends to predominate. In the case of Korea and Mexico, for example, this is 'study abroad'. It appears that significant proportions of Korean and Mexican academics study for their doctorates outside of these countries (mainly in the US) and then return to take up academic employment and, in the case of Korea, post-doctoral study. This situation has been driven by the limited educational choices and a strong public demand for the best education possible which has not been satisfied domestically. In Mexico, barely 1,000 students were enrolled in Mexico's own PhD programmes in 2001 compared with 45,000 in the US (Casanova-Cardiel, 2005).

The international recruitment of staff in Hong Kong makes it a major importer of talent and the dominant academic flow can be characterised as 'magnetic'. However, the high proportion of doctorates obtained outside the territory is a significant reduction from previous surveys. Nevertheless, the majority of Hong Kong academics who originated in mainland China obtained their doctorates in the US or elsewhere. Lastly, Japan, China and Italy are examples of 'self-contained' systems with the majority of academics stating they completed their studies in the country in which they are now working. These countries are either more ethnically homogeneous, do not use English as a language of instruction, and/or have a relatively small range of other countries to draw upon which speak their language.

A quantitative survey like the CAP study can begin to map the flows of academics from country to country, but more qualitative approaches will be needed to explore the impact of these movements on the quality and nature of research, for example. Such investigations could also assess the extent to which the intellectual traditions in the host countries are being influenced by new styles of scholarship and the impact of transnational flows on disciplinary differentiation and interdisciplinary knowledge.

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Regional and national policy frameworks for academic mobility

Academic mobility is increasingly the subject of policy initiatives. However, given the nature of academic research and the strong emphasis on partnerships, academic researchers in general have more opportunities to become mobile than those who mainly teach. For example, the European Research Council's Green Paper, 'The European Research Area: New Perspectives' (CEC, 2007) stresses the importance of transnational academic mobility for the European Research Area and highlights the necessity for realising a single labour market for 'researchers':

> 'A key challenge for Europe is to train, retain and attract more competent researchers. Moreover, the seamless mobility of researchers across institutions, sectors and countries is even more important than for other professions: it [transnational academic mobility] constitutes one of the most efficient vehicles for the transmission of knowledge.' (CEC, 2007: 10-11)

As a step towards this goal, the European Strategic Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) established a European 'roadmap' for new and upgraded pan-European research infrastructures, encouraging researchers to create new 'networks of excellence' through the research Framework Programme and to collaborate effectively with business and other stakeholders, both within and across borders 'in the most cost-effective manner'. Overall, the outcomes of EU research Framework Programmes have been positively appraised as having opened up new channels of communication and exchange among different disciplinary specialists to provide a new mode of research and knowledge production that can transcend the national boundaries of academic interests (Benavot *et al*, 2005).

Local, usually national, policy frameworks can sometimes assist transnational academic flows. For example, in the UK, competition for research funding and student recruitment has intensified in recent years. The changes have created both greater job insecurity and market opportunity: including significant numbers of short-term employment contracts among research-only academic staff. In 2007/08, 75 per cent of research-only staff were on fixed-term contracts, including 45 per cent of all academics in the biological, physical and mathematical sciences and 37 per cent in engineering and technology. Increasing transnational academic mobility into and out of the UK is facilitated by this propensity for short-term contracts in UK universities that are linked with specific funded research projects.

Nevertheless, there is a range of factors and issues beyond the control of institutions, however prestigious, and even inter-governmental organisations that can either facilitate or constrain mobility (or both at the same time). These include:

- similarities or differences between countries in pension schemes, national systems of social security and childcare provision (which can present barriers to female researchers in particular);

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- information or the lack of information about these arrangements, the funding and other support available to facilitate movement, the recruitment procedures used in different countries and actual vacancies;

- language and cultural differences and the ascendancy of the English language in education and research;

- differences in salaries, status, workloads, career patterns, promotion procedures and tenure tracks;

- immigration policies and legislation on highly qualified workers, covering visas and work permits and the time and costs attached to applying for and obtaining these, including arrangements for foreign doctoral graduates wishing to take up post-doctoral or other academic positions.

Mobility of academics into and out of the UK

Moving now to the UK, there is clear evidence of an inflow of international academics to the profession. In 2007/08, 38,240 academic staff were non-UK nationals, representing 22 per cent of the total UK academic population and this proportion has increased significantly in recent years. Twenty-seven per cent of full-time academic staff appointed in 2007/08 came from outside the UK (HESA, 2009). A recent survey of higher education institutions found that the most common region for the recruitment of all levels of academic staff was the European Union (EU). For professors and lecturers, the next most common region was North America, and for researchers it was East Asia (UCEA, 2008). For some subject areas, such as business and management and biological, mathematical and physical sciences, the international labour market has become critical due to difficulties of recruiting in the UK. For other areas, also with large proportions of non-UK academics, such as computing and information technology and electrical and electronic engineering, this is not so apparent. The effect of the Research Assessment Exercise on research-intensive higher education institutions seeking to improve their ratings by recruiting 'star' researchers may be one reason for this. Another may be the shortage of UK-domiciled post-doctoral students available to fill teaching posts in certain subjects.

The main countries of origin of foreign academics working in the UK are Germany, the Republic of Ireland, the United States, China, Italy, France and Greece. However, among professors, the largest non-UK national groups are from the United States, the Republic of Ireland, Germany and Australia. China provides the largest single group of non-UK nationals among researchers and this group constitutes approximately two-thirds of all Chinese staff in UK higher education institutions. Non-UK higher education staff tend to be younger than their UK counterparts, with 64 per cent of them under 40, compared with 33 per cent of UK staff (UUK, 2007). They are also highly concentrated in research-intensive universities, with four institutions

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The main countries of origin of foreign academics working in the UK are Germany, the Republic of Ireland, the United States, China, Italy, France and Greece

employing 31 per cent and 50 per cent of all academic immigrants to be found in only 12 HEIs in 2002/03 (Sastry, 2005).

Students are the major source of new entrants to the academic profession. In 2007/08, students from outside the UK made up 54 per cent of all full-time postgraduates, with 42 per cent coming from outside the EU (UUK, 2007). The UK's 50,000 international postgraduate research (PGR) students represent more than 15 per cent of the global market share, but 50 per cent of these are concentrated in 18 universities and come from only ten countries. Forty per cent of international PGR students want to remain in the UK at completion of their studies, at least temporarily. The US is the main competitor for the UK, with around 40 per cent of the global market share and more than 120,000 PGR students (data from Kemp *et al*, 2008).

Overall, there are more academics coming into the UK than going out. This is particularly the case at the more junior grades, although there is some outflow at the more senior levels, including professors. Junior researchers account for about two thirds of migration in both directions and around half of these are non-UK nationals, including post-doctoral researchers who may spend fairly short periods in the UK. The CAP survey of UK academics found that a higher proportion of senior than junior academics had obtained their doctorate in the country where they were working – a pattern that was not repeated in most of the other national surveys in the study. In fact, in the UK there is a higher turnover of non-UK academics than UK nationals. In 2002/03, 48 per cent of academic emigrants were non-UK nationals, compared with 53 per cent of recruits from overseas (Sastry, 2005). In particular, non-UK European researchers now appear to be viewing the UK as the place to establish their academic reputations and then return to their own countries (or move on elsewhere) – much as UK academics have viewed the US.

Although not conclusive, analyses commissioned by the Higher Education Policy Institute indicated that UK academics with highly-cited publications to their name were more likely to have been attracted to other English-speaking countries and especially the US, whereas those without would tend towards the EU as their destination (Bekhradnia and Sastry, 2005). Together with an analysis of publications data (Gurney and Adams, 2005), there was also evidence to suggest that, while 16 per cent of UK academics have been employed in a country other than the UK during their careers – often as postdoctoral fellows – they usually returned to the academic profession in Britain (Bekhradnia and Sastry, 2005). A related survey of academic migrants in the UK and elsewhere (WSA, 2005), found the most common reasons given for emigrating was 'career development' and 'intellectual opportunities'. On return, many UK researchers subsequently maintained their international research links which often led to visiting professorships at universities abroad (Gurney and Adams, 2005). In the CAP survey, the UK had one of the highest proportions of respondents from the 17 countries in the

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study reporting that they collaborated with international colleagues on research projects (Bennion and Locke, 2010).

University leaders of the most prestigious UK universities are more likely to be recruited from universities abroad than the heads of other institutions. For example, the University of Oxford has been led by two foreign Vice Chancellors consecutively, from New Zealand and the United States. The heads of the Universities of Cambridge and St. Andrews have also worked in the United States (Yale and Harvard respectively) and the Vice Chancellor of the University of Manchester is from Melbourne. This raises questions about the development of an elite cadre of academic leaders circulating among the 'world class' universities as increasingly defined by the international rankings.

Developing a research agenda on transnational academic mobility and UK higher education

Overall, it seems, previously sporadic, exceptional and limited international academic links have become increasingly systematic, dense, multiple and transnational, especially so in Europe. Regional and national policies and the strength of particular institutions (as knowledge nodes) are combining with cultural and personal factors to create new patterns of transnational academic mobility. Multiple institutional affiliations have become possible for academics, through employment by two or more institutions simultaneously in transnational research projects, and with differentiated and tailored contracts. What makes contemporary patterns of academic mobility different from past trends is the simultaneity of interlocking relations of the spontaneity of mobile individuals, national and supra-national policy frameworks and institutional networks of universities in the global cyberspace of knowledge flows.

There are a few major studies of transnational migration in general, some higher education policy documents on academic labour markets and more numerous analyses of international student mobility. However, there have been no full-scale (or in-depth) investigations specifically of the international and transnational mobility of university academics in the context of recent changes in academic staffing national higher education policies on 'internationalisation'. Apart from the foreign senior academic leaders who receive media attention, little is known about international academics' lived experiences in British universities.

Transnational academic mobility has been structured by political and economic forces determining the boundaries and direction of flows, and also involves personal choices and professional networks. The patterns of transnational academic mobility in history are discontinuous. Barriers of ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, religion and culture and the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion alter. Kim (2009) makes an initial attempt to sketch the possibilities for a historical sociology of transnational academic mobility. These possibilities must begin to include efforts to make sense of the

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transformation of knowledge, as it moves; and of the identity of mobile academics through exploring their lived experiences.

As a start, a future research agenda will need to explore the extent to which transnational academic mobility contributes to: (i) the quality of research and the broadening of the intellectual tradition; (ii) the introduction of new styles of scholarship to the UK; (iii) the influence of senior academic leaders from abroad (whether UK nationals or not); and (iv) disciplinary differentiation and interdisciplinary knowledge.

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Governing knowledge globally: policy internationalism and higher education in the age of globalisation

Roger King[11]

Going global. The origins of higher education policy developments are increasingly to be found in transnational sources. Roger King explains how and why.

Introduction

A key aspect of the current Internet-driven wave of globalisation we may describe as policy internationalism. This is a term used by Thatcher (2007) to describe the increased convergence of policy approaches by national governments in many sectors, which in part at least is facilitated by the rapid ease of global communications. Widespread policy borrowing, spreading policy imaginaries by national decision-makers predicated on global comparisons and the notion of the competition-state, and the growing influence of bodies such as the OECD, underpins global convergences in governmental policy prescriptions. In higher education, for example, there appears to be a commonality of view on the most appropriate state-university relationships and on the desired organisational forms for advanced tertiary institutions. But why is this? And how might this convergence be challenged by the persistence of national varieties of higher education governance, perhaps in part as a consequence of robust 'path dependencies' generated by individual territorial histories?

Globalising governance

We may define global governance as involving worldwide processes of coordination and orderliness through the establishment of rules, norms, markets and standards by both government and non-government entities. Four modes of global governance appear particularly relevant in helping to classify the development of policy internationalism: a) inter-governmental (involving 'whole-of-government' exchanges, as in international treaty-making); b) trans-governmental (involving exchanges between ministerial departments from different countries with similar policy responsibilities); c) supranational (implemented by the relatively autonomous central bureaucracies of international organisations, such as found in the EU or the OECD); and d) transnational (where private or non-state actors in cross-border networks possess the authority to construct, implement and monitor rules for particular sectors or activities). Some sectors, such as higher education, may be subject to any or all of these modes.

In the absence of a world government, global governance rests particularly on the coordinating activity of actors in sectors, and, because governance arrangements can be quite particular or specific to sectors, this produces a more 'quilt-like' pattern to world

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orderliness than found in the more encompassing territorial rule of a national government. Within sectors worldwide we may find various forms of cross-territorial coordination. One such involves a harmonisation of sectoral rules and standards between countries (strong). Another is mutual recognition of country differences in national regulation, an approach that retains territorial diversity in governing arrangements but which is based on sufficient convergence on broad principles and processes to allow for common agreement (weak).

It is quite rare in these days of policy internationalism within sectors to find outright rejection by national governments of global governance templates and agreements, even if some countries would prefer that they could simply ignore them. Rather, in circumstances of national reluctance to accept internationally-sanctioned policy prescriptions, overt acceptance of worldwide 'best practice' is likely to be accompanied by behavioural foot-shifting, or other forms of passive and unenthusiastic implementation. The objective is to avoid the full impact of globally-inspired reforms yet also seeking to evade international and other criticism that would follow outright non-adoption.

Behavioural evasion

Strategies of 'mock compliance' and 'regulatory ritualism' are two examples of formal policy adherence being undermined by actual behaviour.

'*Mock compliance'* is especially likely when the costs of global compliance by a country tend to fall disproportionately on influential domestic interests. Walter (2008), for example, in examining the aftermath of the 1997 East Asian financial crisis, notes that governments in the major developed countries, and key international organisations such as the IMF, actively promoted the adoption of Western-based 'international best practice' standards of economic governance in the region after the 1997 crisis, following the widespread belief by such practitioners that failures of governance had contributed to the economic problems.

Predominantly, the Western-inspired reforms involved moving from an informal and often strongly familial model of corporate and state governance to one less discretionary, more formally transparent and which utilised independent regulators. Nonetheless, although the Asian governments felt impelled to introduce such reforms to maintain international legitimacy and global investor confidence, powerful domestic interests ensured that implementation was often inconsistent with the new standards. Governments were thus faced with contradictory pressures. Regulatory forbearance ('turning a blind eye'), administrative failure (lack of governmental impetus and monitoring), and private compliance failure (behaving as before) respectively were among the reasons why effective reform implementation was often blocked or inadequately implemented.

Elements of mock compliance – when the outward appearance of compliance is combined with relatively disguised behavioural divergence from newly-adopted standards – may be found in higher education, too. The European Bologna Process, for example, aims at converging national systems' architectures by 2010, but quite significant harmonization on the surface masks continuing national differences and interpretations more locally (Witte, 2006).

On the other hand, 'regulatory ritualism' (Braithwaite, 2008) tends to develop over time rather than at inception. It has been associated in higher education systems with strategising by institutions and academics in the face of increased external accountability, such as associated with quality assurance. After a period, regulatory processes such as those based on audit, for example, become a 'ritual of comfort' or an 'institution of pacification' rather than evidence of successful and effective compliance (Power, 1997). There is an acceptance of institutionalised means for securing regulatory goals combined with losing focus on achieving the goals or outcomes themselves. Both processes of mock compliance and regulatory ritualism may help to mask persisting national variety in higher education systems within apparently strongly and globally convergent tendencies on the surface.

Policy divergence and convergence in contemporary globalisation

Nonetheless, globalisation is often viewed as 'flattening' national differences in institutions and policies (Friedman, 2006). That is, increased global interconnectivity is regarded as generating common problems for national governments, heightened opportunities for policy networking across countries, not least to address often 'borderless' issues, such as environmental degradation and international criminal activity, and as producing the tendency for countries to adopt common policy solutions. In higher education, for example, we find not only enhanced efforts by decision-makers to develop cross-national agreements on structures and regulation (as with the Bologna Process in Europe) but also the increased salience for national decision-makers of global templates or blueprints, often promulgated by bodies such as the OECD and the World Bank.

These latter models include the 'new public management' ideas on the benefits of institutional diversity within higher education systems, and acceptance that universities are key economic actors in the knowledge economy. Everywhere we find the view (not necessarily well-evidenced) that universities help to provide economic well-being and comparative national advantage through providing the research and the educated personnel necessary to enable countries to compete effectively in the global economy (King, 2009).

A further global template that finds favour among policy-makers in a number of countries has been labelled the 'emerging global model' (EGM) of the research university, not least because of its perceived importance for innovation. National decision-makers appear

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particularly anxious to build-up or attract the top tier of the research universities – the 'world-class universities' as illustrated in the global rankings associated with Shanghai Jiao Tong University and the THE newspaper (especially the strongly research-based Shanghai institutional tables). Research universities are viewed as prioritizing the search for new knowledge, particularly in science and technology, and as producing the advanced research workers critical for modern economies (Mohrman et al., 2008).

The international characteristics of research universities are especially valued by decision-makers, both their collaborative global alliances and worldwide scramble for the best researchers. The key peer influences in the EGM or the top research universities are predominantly global: academics are as likely to set up joint research projects with colleagues in other countries as they are with domestic faculty, and to be appointed from abroad. Effectively, for Mohrman and colleagues, 'the EGM is an intensification and globalisation of the development of research universities in general' (2008: 5).

Four models for policy internationalism in higher education

Among the explanations for policy internationalism and the diffusion of global models we can cite at least four (King, 2009).

1. *Economic competition*

This explanation for policy internationalism tends to be the prevailing orthodoxy in governmental and inter-governmental bodies. It suggests that the nation state's general reliance on successful forms of advanced capitalism in a highly competitive global economy, and the belief that universities are critical instruments for attaining economic prosperity, means that national governments are disposed to adopt the organisational and regulatory models of the world's leading economies and university systems, particularly those of the USA. In the USA is found a higher education system composed of quite highly differentiated, market-based and autonomous institutions with distinctive missions. These characteristics tend to be viewed by international organisations such as the EU and the OECD, and many national governmental decision-makers, as likely to deliver the innovation, knowledge and skills necessary for highly competitive national economic performance. More so than, say, systems where undifferentiated institutions broadly offer similar missions and are subject to tight and quite detailed state supervision.

A difficulty with this economic competition explanation, however, is that universities have wider social functions than simply economic. Moreover, there are reasons other than economic competition for policy makers to emulate other jurisdictions. Particularly they may lack their own resources to design alternatives to prevailing world models, irrespective of whether the latter are appropriate for their own circumstances.

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2. *Inter-governmental governance*

A second explanation for policy internationalism in higher education may be found in the growing authority and institutional influence of the inter-governmental and similar cross-border forms of governance around the world. Good examples are the EU and bodies such as the OECD, the IMF and the World Bank. In most inter-governmental and supranational bodies, members are required both to actively participate in rulemaking and then to implement the outcomes at national level. This requires a willingness to accept institutionally-driven compromises on 'best practice' governing models.

National adaptation to inter-governmental outcomes is made easier by the tendency for transnational governmental bodies to operate at a high level of codified abstraction and principles, as is the case generally with the EU. This leaves many administrative regulatory powers (and room for variation and thus local adaptability) at national level. Even when international bodies lack the legal instruments of the EU or the WTO, for example, they usually issue soft or voluntary codes and recommendations rather than mandatory hard law. This again generates openings for more local interpretations but while retaining an overall broader commitment to inter-governmentalism.

3. *Transnational networks of professionals*

A third explanation for policy internationalism in higher education is to regard transnational networks of professionals as the key. As have noted, global governance generally is 'quilted' into sectors – there is no world government – and this reinforces the influence of professionals, experts and other insiders in networks of the knowledgeable, not least in international organizations such as the OECD. Such networks contain both state and non-state actors, with the 'non-political' prestige of scientific and expert knowledge conferring added potency to policy outcomes.

4. *World society models*

Finally, world society explanations for policy internationalism, associated with the work of Meyer (2006), Frank and Gabler (2006), Powell and DiMaggio (1991), and others, turn away from economic explanations. Rather than emphasising the imperatives of the globalizing knowledge economy as generating territorial convergence in the governance of university systems, they locate it as a result of worldwide social processes. These views rest on the argument that organisations are constructed by wide-scale, increasingly global, cultures and meanings and that these become enshrined in organisational models.

Universities, for example, operate increasingly as 'corporate persons' or autonomous organisations. As such they have become subject to the worldwide growth of formal organisations and processes of rationalisation more generally in recent decades. And this is leading to the increasing standardisation of formal organising across all sectors. There is thus a converging similarity of organisational form and structure in the higher education 'field', reflecting the external

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influences of a range of processes: coercive, including regulatory; mimetic, copying others; and normative, including those values associated with the notion of modernisation.

World society explanations are not merely confined to organisational convergences. Frank and Gabler, for example, suggest that there has been a worldwide synchronisation of changes in university curricula over the twentieth century. Although in part attributable to the university heritage of British colonialism, academic subjects and the topics and manner in which they are studied are remarkably similar around the world. They reflect a universalism rather than response to local conditions, particularly the idea that the world is knowable and amenable to scientific mastery. Increasingly, university curricula reflect global understandings of knowledge and are heavily influenced by scientific validity irrespective of local practices or interpretations. The social sciences especially have been marked by the most notable disciplinary growth in universities around the globe.

There appears to have been a major global-institutional framing that has granted standing and influence to the universal social sciences based on their objects in the rationalised society and the idea that modern society is corrigible to ideas of progress and justice. New universities in developing countries reflect in what they study world-legitimised subjects and standards across learning, research and application, reinforced as state and economic elites become educated in a more global and cosmopolitan world culture than their local ones. There are global institutional frames and models of world reality that emphasise the relative rise and fall in the perceived relevance of particular knowledge domains for explaining current reality, and these are reflected in the subjects that universities typically offer.

Conclusion: soft law

The global diffusion of governance norms is helped by the much greater use in transnational decision-making of modes that are 'softer' and less mandatory than found in territorial nation states containing a monopoly of lawmaking. This is sustained by patterns of coordination that are predominantly sector-based. These more voluntary governing characteristics imply a belief in the efficacy of technocratic, non-political rulemaking in a more competitive and globalising world – a world where soft law, standards, benchmarks, rankings and monitoring frames tend to prevail in the regulatory governance of organisations.

These are influences that are based on rational and universalistic arguments rather than on the hierarchical command or legal authority of states, and are seen as more conducive to achieving understanding, agreement and effectiveness than control through fiat. It generates a form of global governance, involving both formal and informal rule systems, in distinctive sector areas of influence that generates compliance based on shared norms and cognitive belief systems, common practices and widespread standards-following.

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Standardisation is a key mechanism that helps to produce transnational coordination in a world composed of increasingly autonomous organizations, such as contemporary universities, who value their independence and do not take kindly to external state directives, particularly those emanating from abroad. League tables and similar comparative evaluations by newspaper and other non-governmental producers fall into the category of private standard-setting which challenges the traditional regulatory monopoly of national states. But national states, too, are subject to increased standardisation pressures, from inter-governmental entities such as the OECD, and by the publication of comparative national educational and other performances by such bodies. Notions of good practice as found in the leading national performers in such rankings leverage considerable peer pressure on governments.

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Higher education research: global themes and local settings

Mala Singh[12]

In the last two decades, the scope and volume of higher education research has grown enormously. But the debates about what it is and what it is for are by no means settled. Questions about its institutional settings and functions; its relationships with disciplinary interests and cross-disciplinary themes in the humanities and social sciences; the most appropriate methodologies for it; the blurry distinctions between academic and policy oriented research; the balances between theoretical and applied dimensions in the research; and questions about its take up and social impact continue to be raised[13]. However, the now unquestioned importance of higher education in social and economic development has brought policy-oriented research on higher education to the forefront in many higher education reform agendas. The idea that 'evidence-informed' policy will best support effective decision-making in higher education (as in other policy areas) is a useful half fiction attractive to both policy-makers and researchers. When necessary, the former are able to claim expertly and scientifically gathered 'evidence' (rather than ideology or *realpolitik*) as legitimation for policy choices and actions. The latter can presume influence over policy and politics and dream of real social impact. Despite analyses pointing to the contradictions and ambivalences in the 'research-policy-practice' nexus and the dangers of simplistic and un-nuanced understandings of it[14], the generalised idea that higher education research could furnish knowledge, information, data and strategic options to inform actual policy choices continues to reverberate.

The market for 'evidence-informed' policy has now gone global since higher education is no longer the business of nation states alone, nor of a few economically well-endowed regions. Large organising concepts in the form of the 'knowledge society' or 'sustainable development' are invoked by globally influential multi-lateral bodies like the OECD, UNESCO and the World Bank to draw higher education into their policy agendas. The relevant policy frameworks, research themes, data collection areas and projects of these organisations are now routinely informed by a familiar premise about the strategic role of higher education in socio-economic development, both nationally and within regions. National policies for higher education in both the developed and developing world echo this premise, although on-the-ground realities are hugely divergent in all major respects. The challenges of giving effect to the strategic role of

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[13] See, for example, many of the contributions in The Institutional Basis of Higher Education Research: Experiences and Perspectives, edited by S. Schwarz and U. Teichler, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, 2000. Some of these issues also surfaced in the deliberations of a panel at a recent ASHE conference in Vancouver-see the article 'The Insecurity of Higher Ed. Research' in *Inside Highered* (November 9, 2009) at http:// www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/.
[14] See, for example, M. Kogan and M. Henkel, 'Future Directions for Higher Education Policy Research', in The Institutional Basis of Higher Education Research edited by S. Schwarz and U. Teichler, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, 2000; Arie Rip, 'In Praise of Speculation', *Proceedings: Social Sciences for Knowledge and Decision Making*, OECD, Paris, 2001: 95-103.

higher education in contexts of limited resources, lack of relevant information, short timeframes and complex multi-dimensional societal challenges make the idea of 'evidence-informed' policy into a seductive planning discourse, irrespective of how things work in practice. Given the arguments that policy-making is often reductively based on the ''search for simple and elegant solutions'' (Kogan and Henkel, 2000: 28) and that 'evidence is never tidy' (Rip, 2001), policy oriented research is more likely to be seen as 'useful' if it has clear action lines addressed to particular role-players rather than consisting of theoretically rich but practically unresolved Socratic deliberations about the complexities and unpredictability of change in higher education.

Viewed globally, there is a growing convergence of official policy discourses on the goals and functions of higher education on the one hand, and a wide variety of implementation environments and policy translations in different national and regional settings on the other. The convergence produces a set of global 'policy staples' which includes ideas about the contribution of higher education to socio-economic development and social cohesion, increasing and widening participation, and enhancing national and regional innovation capability and competitiveness. The variety of settings exposes huge differences in how policies are interpreted and applied, and what their effects are, depending on prevailing socio-political, economic and cultural factors. All of these policy assumptions and implementation experiences writ large on a global scale open up the space for much more research on higher education, especially in those regions of the world where new higher education systems are taking root or undergoing rapid expansion. More research and knowledge on higher education is necessary in order to map, make sense of and assess dominant trends and developments within higher education itself as well as its wider social impacts. However, it would be rather impoverishing for those systems and for higher education research as a field of enquiry if that research was only narrowly policy driven.

The last decade has seen a number of global and regional developments relating to policy and research on higher education:

- the OECD's 2004-2008 Thematic Review of Tertiary Education in 24 countries[15];

- the Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge[16] established by UNESCO (2001-2009), with a special focus on increasing information about higher education and research systems in low and middle income countries;

- the World Bank's recanted position since the 1990s about the importance of higher education to the knowledge economy[17] and its loans to more than 100 countries for higher education reform and development;

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[15] See www.oecd.org/edu/tertiary/review/synthesisreport.
[16] See http://portal.unesco.org/education/.
[17] See, for example, World Bank, Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education, Washington DC, 2002; World Bank, Accelerating Catch-up: Tertiary Education for Growth in sub-Saharan Africa, Washington DC, 2009.

- the European Commission's championing of and support for the Bologna reforms to create a European Higher Education Area, and the creation of a European Research Area to advance the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy;

- the European Science Foundation's commissioned research on Higher Education Looking Forward (HELF 2006-8) and its follow-up research projects on Higher Education and Social Change (EUROHESC 2009-2011)[18];

- The African Union's Harmonisation Strategy for higher education intended to contribute to the revitalisation of African higher education, improve quality and facilitate academic mobility and the recognition of qualifications[19].

These recent examples of heightened strategic and research attention to higher education have dramatically increased expectations among diverse internal and external stakeholders of what higher education could and should be delivering. They have opened up higher education to new opportunities and non-traditional networks, and brought a multitude of daunting socio-economic tasks, often without additional resources or capacity. As indicated earlier, the new strategic frame of reference has also hugely expanded the terrain for higher education studies - for in-country as well as international comparative studies. The growing need for more studies on higher education, especially in respect of policy oriented research and evaluation studies, is not often matched by available capacity to undertake the required research, especially in the global south. This problem is often exacerbated by lack of funding to support research and research training activities. What opportunities and challenges does this situation present for new or enhanced modes of collaboration between higher education researchers in the global north and the global south? Are there, for example, enough common reference points for more comparative research to be undertaken which cuts across traditional demarcations between higher education systems in OECD and non-OECD countries? Such a step might make some policy sense in view of the increasing insertion of higher education into a global frame of reference. However, some of the differences in development priorities and associated research themes may be still too stark and may in fact divert attention from a research focus on local priorities in developing countries. Given the increasing differentiation within non-OECD countries themselves, there may, nevertheless, be possibilities in reconceptualising comparative research frames of reference from the global north to take account of, for example, the 'Rising Powers', as envisaged in the ESRC Plan for 2008-2011[20].

The key concerns raised at the World Conference on Higher Education held in Paris in July 2009 provide a glimpse of the 'headline' issues needing to be addressed in changing higher

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[18] See www.esf.org.
[19] See www.africa-union.org.
[20] See www.esrc.ac.uk.

education systems around the globe. The Communiqué[21] from the Conference as well as the recommendations made to the World Conference from regional meetings in Latin America, Africa, Asia, Europe and the Arab world reflect the development challenges facing higher education in those regions. Issues of access, equity, quality and diversification, and trends in relation to internationalisation, regionalisation and globalisation continued to dominate the agenda for debate, research, policy and action. Building inclusive and diverse knowledge societies and facilitating sustainable development were flagged as key reference points for the international higher education agenda. The need for governments to maintain or increase investments in higher education and the importance of regulatory frameworks for quality were also emphasised as requiring attention by member states. The above issues point to a raft of associated knowledge and information needs which add up to a wide-ranging research agenda. Such an agenda could provide the theorisations, the conceptual frameworks, the data, analyses and assessments which are required to understand more clearly what is going on in higher education in different parts of the world and to support ongoing policy development, planning, implementation and monitoring of higher education.

Many of the debates at the World Conference were also accompanied by concerns that the current economic downturn would widen the gap between developed and developing countries, impacting negatively on the global development agenda. Less emphasised were the gaps in access, quality and sustainability that the crisis could widen between institutions in the same higher education system and the negative diversification that this might produce. Underpinning the deliberations in 2009, as in the case of the previous World Conference held in 1998, were the aspirations for a redefined 'social contract' between higher education and society in an era of massification, declining public funds, and social and economic development goals which are increasingly prioritising knowledge and its applications. For all the emphasis on the economic role and importance of higher education, the issues of higher education as a public good, and the public mission of higher education and its contribution to the development of citizenship skills and capabilities for democratic life were re-asserted. It will be interesting to see what the focus areas and 'performance indicators' might look like in a concrete research agenda on higher education and the public good.

The issues that were identified for attention at the World Conference as well during a number of preparatory regional meetings constitute, in many instances, familiar territory for policy-makers and researchers, having already featured on their agendas in the last decade. However, some new dynamics became clearer at the 2009 World Conference and are important to track as evolving policy and research fields. One set of issues has to do with the likely impacts of the economic crisis in re-orienting higher education policy - what are likely changes in the functions and capacities of higher education, in

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[21] See www.unesco.org.

its access, equity and quality goals, and in the take-up of its products and services by its 'consumers' and 'users'. The prospects for a widening of the access and quality gaps are very real, both between developed and developing countries as well as within each cluster. Another dynamic has to do with the set up and/or rapid expansion of higher education systems, both public and private, in the Middle East, Asia, Latin America and Africa, and the developmental impact of this phenomenon on the regions and countries involved as well as beyond them. The internationalisation agenda in the developed economies will no doubt be impacted upon by an increase in higher education capacity in the developing world. The expected contribution of higher education to poverty eradication, and to the achievement of the 'Millennium Development Goals' and the 'Education for All' targets places heavy socio-economic responsibilities on higher education in addition to the challenges relating to improving access, pedagogy and quality.

The CHERI themes (Employment and the Knowledge Society, Equity and Social Justice, and Management and Regulation) as well as the issues addressed in this research report resonate with many of the priority focus areas which preoccupy policy-makers and researchers on higher education in both the developed and developing world. The almost unchallenged premise about the centrality of higher education to the knowledge society and the knowledge economy has brought increased attention to what is taught and what is learned within higher education institutions, especially in relation to graduate readiness for the world of work and relevant competencies for the labour market. Higher education, since medieval times, has been supplying trained professionals for particular labour markets (the priesthood, medicine, the legal profession). In successive waves of reform and social responsiveness, higher education has also provided engineers, teachers, social workers and other professionals, largely on its own terms or with the involvement of professional associations. The ostensible role of higher education in advancing national and regional economic competitiveness has accelerated a focus on employer and consumer perspectives in thinking about what constitutes effective education and training.

Two articles, one by John Brennan and Miriam David and the other by Lore Arthur and Brenda Little, both show how research findings point beyond the boundaries of conventional policy premises to unexpected complexities and pose new questions for further investigation. The findings highlight learning dimensions valued by students which do not feature among the categories that determine high places on rankings ladders. These ladders, as we know, have become fudged proxies for excellence and quality (presumably also of the learning experience). The dimensions valued by students include the social and personal benefits of university study alongside the acquisition of disciplinary competence and employability skills. Some of the skills valued by students may be categorised as 'soft' skills (presumably seen as 'good to have' but not as essential as specific vocational competences). Research among employers is showing that these kinds of 'soft' skills, including communication

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ability, teamwork, ability to function in different social settings, etc. are also valued in the workplace, especially as it grows more diverse, complex and non-homogenous[22]. What the research findings may be showing is that those who make policy for higher education on a set of narrow mechanical premises about teaching, learning and employability may be lagging behind the views of 'consumers'(students) and 'users' (employers) of higher education.

The connections between higher education and the public good and higher education and social transformation are also frequently invoked in higher education policy discourses, as in the recent World Conference on Higher Education. Very often these issues are not given as much theoretical or empirical attention in policy frameworks and research investigations as is given to the role of higher education in economic development or the importance of producing work-ready graduates. However, the potential for exploring the relationship between higher education and social transformation has increased through attention to the role of higher education institutions in regional development. An example of this can be found in the OECD Reviews of Higher Education in Regional and City Development which are underway in developed and emerging economies and which investigate the impact of higher education and its teaching, research and community engagement activities on economic, social and cultural development in those regions. The HEART project reported on by Alan Cochrane and Ruth Williams is another example of this regional focus. It combines the interest in the regional impact of higher education with a focus on the contribution that higher education institutions could make to the public good, taking into account but looking beyond the economic domain. The public good injunctions in higher education policy discourse need much more substantial content in relation to the functions and impacts of higher education. The HEART research findings are an important platform from which to draw more detailed conclusions about the role of institutions in delivering on the public good. For future research investigations, they help to set out more concretely the parameters of the public good and the possibilities and limits of social transformation in specific contexts of social and economic disadvantage.

Internationalisation is now part of the policy agendas of many national higher education systems as well as of institutions themselves[23]. It is also fertile ground for researchers trying to construct reasonably accurate data and analytical pictures of the growing phenomenon of internationalisation 'at home' and 'abroad' (Knight, 2008: 3). More interesting is the task of revealing what drives internationalisation and what its impacts on academic systems (beyond the financial dimensions) as well as on the individuals themselves might be. Terri Kim and William Locke focus on academic mobility in and out of the UK and begin the task of identifying a research agenda that is more qualitatively focused on changes to intellectual and scholarship

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[22] See, for example, D.Hodges and N.Burchell, Research Report, Business Graduate Competencies: Employers' Views on Importance and Performance, Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 2003, 4(2): 16-22.
[23] See IAU Surveys of Internationalisation among higher education institutions in 2003, 2005 and 2009. www.iau-aiu.net.

traditions as well as impacts on disciplinary landscapes as a result of academic mobility into the UK. The darker side of internationalisation has to do with mostly one-way academic flows into the UK and other developed economies in the form of the 'brain drain' from developing countries. An often cited grim statistic in relation to Africa, for instance, comes from the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the International Organisation for Migration - about 20,000 skilled African professionals are leaving the continent every year since 1990 (Moulton, 2009: 21) with the loss for the continent translating into a variety of gains for the developed economies in which they live and work. This was an issue flagged in the UNESCO Communiqué from the World Conference with a call to 'find common solutions to foster brain circulation and alleviate the negative impact of brain drain'.

The inclusion of higher education in the globalising policy agendas of multilateral organisations like the OECD opens up the possibility for an increasing measure of convergence in higher education policy discourses. Roger King examines the modalities through which this trend is facilitated, while interrogating the unclear alignment between ostensible global policy convergence and actual variety in national contexts. Analysts looking at higher education developments and trends in Europe have argued that, in the last decade, the impact of 'global and supra-national sources' on higher education appears to be much greater than 'national or local ones' (Usher, 2009: 97). Policy convergence under the pressurising influence of emerging global 'templates' may be an even greater challenge for new higher education systems and institutions in developing countries. This is because of the frequent lack of capacity to 'contextualise' and mediate relevant elements from powerful global 'prescriptions' for social and economic development. The potential of such templates for distracting attention from pressing local challenges is also great. The politics and practicalities of connecting meaningfully the local and the global in and through higher education becomes an even richer field of research investigation as higher education change spreads beyond high and middle income countries to the least developed economies of the world.

In conclusion, how is higher education research likely to unfold in light of a global framing of the relationship between higher education and social change *vis a vis* a proliferation of local and regional settings within which pertinent research questions have to be posed? An emerging common pool of policy themes for research investigation is already evident from recent global events like the World Conference on Higher Education. Hopefully an increase in context-informed research, especially in new and emerging systems, will add to our global knowledge base about higher education but also bring greater reflexivity and fresh perspectives to the ways in which we think about higher education and social change. Reflexivity in higher education research could come from stronger links with disciplinary and interdisciplinary bodies of knowledge in the humanities and social sciences. It also requires thinking about research on higher education beyond ''Policy as numbers'' (Ozga and Lingard, 2007: 75-77) - the tendency to give primacy to the gathering and analysis of data in a

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narrow understanding of the 'evidence' required to inform policy decision-making.

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Some additional current and recent CHERI projects

Changes in Networks, Higher Education and Knowledge Societies (CINHEKS)

'Knowledge society' is a key idea in explaining the current changing relationship between higher education and society. This notion is based on a premise about the importance of knowledge in contemporary social and economic development.

The CINHEKS project is a collaborative multi-country investigation into how higher education institutions are networked in knowledge societies in three regions of the world: Europe, the USA and Japan.

It focuses on:

- the concrete linkages among academics, institutions and external role-players in different knowledge societies,

- the impact of such networks on academics, institutions and society, and

- the basis of distinct differences between different knowledge societies.

The project aims to refine 'knowledge society' as an explanatory construct of social theory and critically examine how higher education institutions operate within knowledge societies. In this way, the project aims to provide more evidence-based content for policy development.

The CINHEKS project is a three-year study within the European Science Foundation's Higher Education and Social Change (EuroHESC) research programme, and runs from October 2009 - September 2012. It is led by the University of Jyvaskyla (Finland) and is being undertaken in collaboration with researchers from CHERI at the UK's Open University, and research teams at the University of Kassel (Germany), Hiroshima University (Japan), the Technical University of Lisbon (Portugal) and the University of Arizona (USA).

The Economic and Social Research Council is funding CHERI's participation in the study, including a PhD studentship.

The Higher Education Empirical Research database

For almost a decade, CHERI has been maintaining and developing the HEER database, which is an open, web-based resource comprising summaries of published empirical research on higher education topics. The database is free to all users and can be accessed via **http://heerd.open.ac.uk/**.

A range of types of research is included comprising academic research published in journals and books and 'grey literature' (i.e. policy research which is funded by policy and funding bodies). It does not include opinion, position or theoretical papers. Most of the research is UK-focused. Relevant research is identified from regular searches of journals and other sources - for example, the websites of UK HE policy and funding bodies and research centres, international organisations, and others. New summaries of published research are added when reports become available; the database currently holds over 1,700 summaries, most of which date from 2000.

The database is sponsored by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Higher Education Funding Council for England It has been developed for the main higher education policy bodies but will also be of use to staff in higher education institutions, such as senior institutional managers, planning officers, researchers (institutional researchers, educational and other researchers), and other staff (e.g. those responsible for staff and educational development, internationalisation, widening participation, knowledge transfer etc).

Eurostudent

The EUROSTUDENT project collates comparable data on the social and economic conditions of higher education student life in Europe. The EUROSTUDENT network is open to all European countries and currently 30 European countries are taking part in the fourth round of EUROSTUDENT. Each country uses a common core of questions to collect data from a cross-section of students enrolled on ISCED 5A programmes. EUROSTUDENT is centrally co-ordinated by the Higher Education Information System (HIS) in Hanover, Germany and HIS works with six other partners, including CHERI, to carry out the detailed project work. Within EUROSTUDENT, CHERI is responsible for exploiting the results emerging from the project (along with the NIFU STEP of Norway).

Further details about EUROSTUDENT can be found at www.eurostudent.eu.

Study into Student Engagement

In 2008, CHERI completed a study commissioned by HEFCE which aimed to determine the present extent and nature of student engagement in higher education in England to help inform policy development and institutional practice in this area.

For the purposes of the study, student engagement was defined as being concerned with institutional and student union processes and practices such as those relating to formal student representation and student feedback, and other informal processes which seek to inform and enhance the collective student learning experience (rather than specific teaching, learning and assessment activities designed to enhance an individual student's engagement with their own learning).

The study found that institutions view student engagement as central to enhancing the student experience, but more emphasis seems to be placed on viewing students as consumers and rather less on viewing students as partners in a learning community – for student unions, however, the emphasis is on the latter. Most higher education institutions and further education colleges rate their student engagement processes, comprising a basic model of student feedback questionnaires and student representation systems, as reasonably or very effective. Student unions are less likely to do so. But actual practices vary between and within institutions, and it seems that their effectiveness could be improved. Institutions are taking steps to 'close the feedback loop' and inform students of actions taken, but it is not clear the extent to which students use the opportunity to seek out information about planned actions of improvements. More positively, there is some (rather limited) evidence that greater engagement is engendered when students themselves take the lead in investigating specific issues affecting the collective student learning experience and develop discussion papers for debate.

The report made a number of specific recommendations, and called for broader discussions to be initiated across the sector about the nature of higher education learning communities.

Read the report at www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2009/rd03_09/.

The Impact of Foundation Degrees on Students and Employers

Foundation degrees (Fds) were a specific UK government initiative launched in 2000 with the aim of meeting a perceived shortfall in the numbers of people with intermediate higher technical and associate professional skills, and of increasing and widening participation in higher education. By design, Fds are intended to be developed in close collaboration with employers, to ensure the integration of academic and work-based learning. This study, commissioned by Foundation Degree Forward, was undertaken jointly with the Learning and Skills Network between May 2007 and February 2008.

The study found that students enrol on Fds for a number of positive reasons relating to enhancing their career prospects, and both students and employers perceive a range of benefits that Fd study brings to individual students and the workplace. In particular, employers note their employees gain broader understandings of the industry as a whole, performance in the job improves and personal attributes are enhanced. However, employer engagement in the delivery of Fds was found to be variable, and in some case minimal. And whilst full-time students were more likely to consider it should be greater, many part-time students were ambivalent about the need for greater involvement and perceived some drawbacks. Academic staff involved in designing and delivering Fds spoke of the challenges of securing effective and sustained engagement with employers, and of ensuring stability of provision when meeting employers' demands for bespoke (or niche) Fds. Staff also highlighted the challenges posed by needing to ensure that vocationally-based learning was meaningful in an academic context.

The report concluded that many of the Fds involved in the study had yet to capitalise on the intended levels of integration of academic and work-based learning, and of employer engagement - seen as some of the distinctive features of Fds.

Read the report at http://www.fdf.ac.uk/files/CHERILSNreport.pdf.

Interim evaluation of Lifelong Learning Networks

Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs) have been established across England since 2005 as part of a Higher Education Funding Council for England initiative. These networks are partnerships of higher education institutions, further education colleges and other organisations, which aim to improve the progression opportunities for vocational learners into and through higher education. In 2007 CHERI undertook an interim evaluation – a 'progress check' - of the LLNs to help HEFCE develop policy and support good practice as it develops; the report was published in 2008 (http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2008/rd05_08/). The evaluation comprised a range of activities, including exploration of eight case study LLNs supplemented by analysis of documentation relating to the full complement of LLNs. The main findings were that it is too soon to make substantive and well-evidenced statements about progress; LLNs have taken time to become embedded but the foundations have been established for improving vocational learners' progression opportunities.

As LLNs are reaching the end of their HEFCE funding periods (and indeed some have already done so), there are a number of challenges that will need to be faced: for example, how far have LLN activities become embedded into the every day practices and processes of partner institutions; what happens when the HEFCE funding period comes to an end; will replacement funding be found from elsewhere; will the commitment of partner institutions continue once HEFCE funding ceases? These are questions the interim evaluation was not able to address. However, questions such as these will need to be asked by the 'summative' evaluation, commissioned by HEFCE in 2009, which will report on the success of the initiative and the impact it has had on improving progression opportunities for vocational learners.

Counting What is Measured or Measuring What Counts? League Tables and their Impact on Higher Education Institutions in England

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) commissioned research into national and international university rankings, how they are compiled and the impact they have on institutions' behaviour. CHERI undertook this study in collaboration with Hobsons Research and it involved interviews with league table compilers, a survey of all English HEIs and case studies developed through interviews and focus groups at six institutions.

The research concluded that the most influential UK league tables largely reflected reputational factors such as entry qualifications, degree classifications awarded and Research Assessment Exercise grades. The analysis also indicated that:

- measures used in the tables are largely determined by the data available, not by clear definitions of quality;

- some of these measures are poor indicators of the qualities identified; and

- methods for calculating scores are not always transparent, and some produce non-standardised results.

The impact study found that, despite these imperfections, institutions are strongly influenced by league tables – although they are reluctant to acknowledge this. Many governing bodies use the tables as performance indicators and some set strategic aims to improve their rankings.

Universities were concerned that efforts to move up existing league tables may conflict with institutional and government priorities on widening participation: for example, the proportion of good degrees attained might be adversely affected by admitting a high proportion of applicants with non-standard qualifications. They also see possible tensions between league table performance and academic standards, community engagement and provision of socially valued subjects.

The report was published in April 2008: www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2008/rd05_08/.

The Comparative Student Experience

This study, commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, explored differences between the experience of higher education study in the UK and the experience of study in other (mainly European) countries. The study took the form of a literature review

and further analysis of existing national and international datasets from other CHERI projects.

The study looked at how much time students devoted to their studies and how that time was spent, at their attitudes and approaches to study and at how these seemed to affect the outcomes of learning. Comparisons were made with students in other European countries and, within the UK, between different universities and subjects and between different types of student.

The study explores the diversity of the student experience in higher education and discusses the significance and implications of the differences to be found.

The project's report – *Diversity in the student learning experience and time devoted to study: a comparative analysis of the UK and European evidence*- is available on the HEFCE website.

Read the report at http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2009/rd06_09/.

Higher Education in Europe Beyond 2010: Resolving Conflicting Social and Economic Expectations

This project was part of the 'Forward Look' programme of the European Science Foundation ESF). It aimed to develop a scientific agenda for future higher education research.

CHERI led the project in collaboration with colleagues from the Universities of Twente in the Netherlands, Sciences Po in France, Kassel in Germany and Jyvaskyla in Finland. The project reviewed existing research literatures and made recommendations for future research under the following themes:

> Higher education and the needs of the knowledge society
>
> Higher education and the achievement (or prevention) of equity and social justice
>
> Higher education and its communities: interconnections and interdependencies
>
> Steering and governance of higher education
>
> Differentiation and diversity of institutional forms and professional roles

Workshops involving international scholars were held in different parts of Europe during 2006/07 to critique and extend the separate reviews and produce a synthesis. The project debated the implications of the themes and synthesis reports for higher education policy at European and national levels. The project's final conference was held in London in October 2007.

ESF published the thematic report entitled "Higher education looking forward: relations between higher education and society" in September 2007 and the synthesis report entitled "Higher education looking forward: an agenda for future research" in July 2008. Both are available on its website at www.esf.org/publications.html. A special issue of *Higher Education* (Vol 30, No. 3) based on the project's thematic reports has also been published.

The project led to the establishment of the Higher Education and Social Change (EuroHESC) programme by ESF. EuroHESC involves a number of projects which entail interdisciplinary comparative research into the changing relationship between higher education and society. CHERI's CINHEKS project (see above) is one of these projects.

Further information about the EuroHESC research programme can be found at www.esf.org.

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